

MINUTES of the meeting of Community Services Scrutiny Committee held at The Council Chamber, Brockington, 35 Hafod Road, Hereford on Monday 6 April 2009 at 10.00 am

Present: Councillor TM James (Chairman)
Councillor PM Morgan (Vice Chairman)

Councillors: GFM Dawe, BA Durkin, DW Greenow, KS Guthrie, MAF Hubbard, B Hunt and RH Smith

In attendance: Councillors PJ Edwards and WLS Bowen

96. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor R V Stockton

97. NAMED SUBSTITUTES

There were no named substitutes.

98. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Name	Item	Interest
Cllr B Hunt	7 - Environment & Culture and Regeneration Directorates: Performance for the Nine-Month Period to Dec 2008	Personal – as Council appointed Board Member, West Mercia Police Authority.
Cllr RH Smith	7 - Environment & Culture and Regeneration Directorates: Performance for the Nine-Month Period to Dec 2008	Personal – as Council appointed Board Member, West Mercia Police Authority.

99. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That consideration of the minutes for the meeting held on 11 March 2009 be deferred to the next meeting of the Committee.

100. SUGGESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC ON ISSUES FOR FUTURE SCRUTINY

Mr P McKay suggested that the Committee should scrutinise the amount of time taken to undertake Definitive Map modification orders, and why none had been determined in the previous five years. His concerns extended to the issue of Public Rights of Way and Green Lanes.

Resolved:

That;

- a) as the issues also fell within the Terms of Reference of the Environment Scrutiny Committee, discussions would be held with the Chairman of Environment Scrutiny in order to consider the matter as a joint issue for both Committees;

and;

- b) a report outlining the backlog of Definitive Map modification orders and how the issue was to be resourced and resolved, would be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee. Consideration would then be given as to whether a Scrutiny Review of the matter was appropriate.

101. REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING 2008/09

The Committee received the report on the Community Services budgets for the period to 28 February 2009.

The Community Services Accountant drew the Committee's attention to Appendix 1 of the report, which set out the detailed Budget Monitoring Report. She reported that the total Community Services budget for 2008/09 had increased to £10,057,926 from the amount reported to previous meeting, which was £9,953,992. The increase of £103,934 was as a result of the receipt of budget from the Area Based Grant of £181,934 within Community Safety and the reduction of budget of £78k to Leisure Services budgets.

She went on to say that the Economic Development budget was expected to underspend by £65k, this being due to vacancy savings of £20k and the return of unspent grant from the Edgar Street Grid project of £45k. Community Regeneration was forecasted to underspend by £16k as a result of savings on grant expenditure. The Management cost centre was also expected to underspend by £32k due to a reduction in activity, in order to manage budget pressures within the regeneration directorate.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

102. ENVIRONMENT & CULTURE AND REGENERATION DIRECTORATES: PERFORMANCE FOR THE NINE-MONTH PERIOD TO DECEMBER 2008

The Committee considered the report on the performance indicator position and other performance management information for the Economic and Community Services Division within the Regeneration Directorate and Cultural Services functions within the Environment and Culture Directorate.

The Improvement Manager reported that the overall position indicated a further improvement in the number of indicators judged to be Green (On course to achieve targets). The provision of data and actions contributing to improved performance had enabled a rating as Green or Amber (Some progress, but data not available to determine whether the target would be achieved) for a significant number of previously Red (Not on target/no activity reported) rated indicators. He went on to highlight two indicators that had slipped from Amber to Red. These were NI 166 (average earnings of employees in the area) and BVPI 126 (domestic burglaries). Earnings had increased in Herefordshire, but the gap between those in the County and the West Midlands as whole had also increased. Robberies (BVPI 127b) was also likely to be worse than the previous year, but it was not considered a priority by the Herefordshire Community Safety & Drugs Partnership.

In reply to concerns raised over the manner in which indicators had been prioritised, it was noted that BVPI 127b was a target set by the West Mercia Constabulary, and the data was collected by the Herefordshire Community and Safety Drugs Partnership. The Police were the lead originator of this particular indicator concerned, and at present, performance against this indicator fell within their acceptable norms. There was no question that the West Mercia Police Authority did not take these issues seriously, but the figures were low in Herefordshire in comparison with the rest of the region.

In the ensuing discussion, the following matters were raised:

- That NI 152 was shown as green was a technical anomaly on the report. Data was now available which would allow a baseline to be set.

- That the next report to the Committee would have the vast majority of baselines set, apart from those that relied upon external data from central government.
- That the baseline for NI 11 was taken from the national Active People Survey (April-October 2008). Engagement with the Arts was not asked as a specific question, but a reply was left up to the respondent.

RESOLVED:

- That:** (a) **the report on performance be noted,**
and;
 (b) **areas of concern and exception continue to be monitored.**

103. PROGRESS REPORT ON ACTION PLAN FOR THE EDGAR STREET GRID (ESG) SCHEME

The Committee received a progress report on the Action Plan for the Edgar Street Grid (ESG) Scheme.

The Head of Economic and Community Services reported on progress against the actions agreed in response to the Committee's Review of the Edgar Street Grid Project. She stated that the following actions were being taken:

- Recommendation 1, the improvements to Widemarsh Street would potentially be underway from January 2010.
- Recommendation 2, a consultation workshop on the Transport Hub had been undertaken by ESG Ltd on the 29th January.
- On Recommendations 3 and 4 there was, as yet, no progress. In the latter case, this was because the capital works in Cathedral Close had not yet started.
- Recommendation 5 – linkage to the Courtyard: design work on the new development was continuing and this issue would be addressed through this process.

In reply to concerns that a design for the City was being developed with no consultation with the local populace, the Cabinet Member (Economic Development and Community Services) said that the Design Brief had been developed by Ben Hamilton Bailey and would inform the overall design. This was an important part of the process, as there was no design brief for the City as a whole. Businesses in Widemarsh Street would be consulted over the designs. Whilst the timetable for the project had been altered, it would happen. It was understandable that there would be concerns about such changes even in normal market conditions, but it should be noted that it was unlikely that the work would be undertaken until after the recession was over. He added that this was an important period for the City, and that independent retailers had a great opportunity to help generate additional footfall during the period of change for the City.

RESOLVED: That the progress to achieve the Action Plan be noted.

104. WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee noted the Work Programme.

RESOLVED: That the work programme be approved and reported to the Strategic Monitoring Committee.